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DIRECTORATE OF
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WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

Aftermath of Elections in the Dominican Republic

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AFTERMATH OF ELECTIONS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

On 16 August a democratically elected administration in the Dominican Republic will succeed another for the first time in history. Scarcely more than four years after a near civil war shook the country, the Dominicans returned incumbent Joaquin Balaguer to the presidency with a majority in a peaceful and relatively honest election held on 16 May. Measured against the chaos of 1965, the holding of contested and free elections was in itself a significant political stride forward. Balaguer's impressive victory in the five-man race has reinforced his control of the government, at least in the short run.

The victory, however, was a personal triumph for Balaguer; the fledgling political system that emerged after the assassination of long-time dictator Trujillo in 1961 is showing signs of strain. The major opposition party and the only legitimate political representative of the left, the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD), refused to participate formally in the elections, charging the government with repression. The bitter political aftertaste of the 1965 revolution is still evident in its revolutionary mouthings. The PRD has undergone some withering of its organizational base, and possibly of its popular following, and has now forsaken even the semblance of a loyal opposition. As evidenced during the campaign, other parties, even of the far right, would be willing to cooperate with the PRD should they see an opportunity to oust Balaguer. Under these circumstances, the President will continue to rely on the armed forces as an essential political prop.

Because of his popular and military support, Balaguer is one of the few Dominicans capable of achieving a modicum of political and economic progress while maintaining stability. It is less than certain, however, that even he will be able to complete another four-year term successfully. He is a [redacted]

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His convincing election win, and the consternation and disorganization it has caused his foes, probably will provide him some respite from political attack after the inauguration in August. During his term, however, he is likely to be faced with continuing, and probably increasingly violent, problems of public order. His programs, designed both of necessity and political inclination to preserve order rather than to promote progress, will be under mounting attack. Not even the most ambitious programs are likely to stem the growing and massive unemployment in the cities—a reservoir of disenchantment upon which the left hopes to feed.

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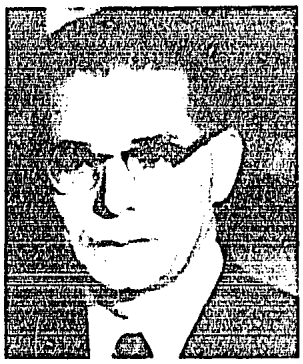
The Elections

The elections themselves were practically anticlimactic after a campaign during which all opposition groups threatened to withdraw; Balaguer quit his office in an unprecedented move to keep several parties in the race; the leader of the left, former president Juan Bosch, returned after three and a half years of self-imposed exile only to reinforce his party's decision to abstain; and one presidential candidate, Garcia-Godoy, died. About 60 persons were killed as a result of campaign violence.



President Balaguer

The campaign centered on personalities rather than on programs. The opposition attacked Balaguer on grounds of "continuismo," claiming that his re-election, although constitutionally permissible, was morally repugnant to a majority of the people. They charged that re-election represented a reversion to Trujilloism (Rafael Trujillo had held the country in a dictatorial vise from 1930-1961 and Balaguer had served in his government for many years). Balaguer, as is his custom, accepted opposition charges without comment and appealed to the people to renew his mandate so that he might complete unfinished programs. Military support for Balaguer, although pervasive, stayed within the bounds of Dominican political propriety—if only because the armed forces were confident that he could win easily without arm twisting.

Opposition efforts attracted headlines but had limited public impact. The final electoral tally gave Balaguer some 650,000 votes. His closest competitor, Vice President Lora, lagged 400,000 votes behind. Lora benefited to some extent from half-hearted support from the PRD. Former General Wessin y Wessin, even farther to the right than Balaguer or Lora, attracted only 150,000 votes. The two participating representatives of the center and left, the Social Christians (PRSC) and the National Conciliation Movement (MCN), attracted only about 50,000 votes each. None of these parties has a very bright future. Both Lora's and Wessin's organizations represented personal campaign vehicles not designed for longevity. Their fate is tied to the personal fortunes of their leaders. The PRSC will continue its dogged struggle to gain national prominence, but it seems unlikely that the party will make any startling gains. The MCN, with the death of Garcia-Godoy, its only well-known leader, probably will wither away.

Balaguer's personal victory was buttressed by overwhelming congressional and municipal majorities. The President's supporters won 26 of 27 senate seats, 60 of 74 seats in the house of deputies, and 75 of 77 mayoralties. On the basis of percentages and elective seats, Balaguer's 56-percent majority was an impressive victory and a stunning disappointment for his foes; both Lora and Wessin registered their public "surprise" at the results. The contest clearly illustrated that there is no individual on the center or right who approaches Balaguer's national stature.

The total number of ballots cast, however, fell about 200,000 votes short of the total in the 1966 elections despite a significant increase in the number of eligible voters. The percentage of participating voters (about 61 percent) contrasts with that of 1966 (74 percent) and 1962 (67 percent), and Balaguer's 645,000 total was more than 100,000 votes short of his 1966 tally.

The PRD has used these figures to calculate an abstentionist vote of some 700,000—larger than any individual candidate's total—which it

Election Results by Party 1966 & 1970

1966		1970
559,887	Reformist Party Balaguer (PR)	655,705
494,570	Dominician Revolutionary Party Bosch (PRD)	Abstained
30,660	Revolutionary Social Christian Party (PRSC)	58,949
	Democratic Integration Movement Lora (MIDA)	240,557
	Democratic Quisqueyan Party Wessin (PQD)	153,591
	National Conciliation Movement (MCN)	51,039
	Others	
1,700,000	Estimated number voters	1,900,000
1,340,570	Total Vote	1,159,841

Congressional Results by Party

Senate		Senate
22	Reformist Party (PR)	26
5	Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD)	Abstained
	Democratic Integration Movement (MIDA)	1
27	TOTAL	27

House of Deputies		House of Deputies
48	Reformist Party (PR)	60
26	Revolutionary Party (PRD)	Abstained
	Democratic Integration Movement (MIDA)	11
	Democratic Quisquevan Party (PQD)	3
74	TOTAL	74

claims is indicative of its continued and growing strength and of Balaguer's declining popularity. For a number of reasons, such claims are not persuasive. Popular interest in the recent elections cannot compare with that generated in either of the last two contests. In 1962, the country's first free elections were being held after decades of Trujillo dictatorship, and campaigning was lengthy and extensive. In 1966, the elections took place after a civil uprising had generated worldwide interest and the contest had pitted the country's dominant political figures—Balaguer and Bosch—head on in essentially a two-man race. A comparatively small vote this year was consistent with slow-starting campaigns and the widespread expectation that Balaguer would win. PRD abstention, although significant, was only a contributing factor to the low turnout.

The PRD stand is also somewhat undercut by the election results in the capital, where its strength is the greatest. The popular incumbent mayor, a former member of Balaguer's Reformist Party who broke with the President and ran on an opposition ticket, received outright PRD support but lost a close race to the President's mayoral candidate. Balaguer himself amassed a surprising plurality in the Santo Domingo environs, an area where he lost badly in 1966.

The President's opponents are impugning the results in a number of areas, but their charges are pro forma. The Central Electoral Board is unlikely to uphold the accusations, which would not, in any event, alter the over-all picture of an impressive Balaguer victory. Wessin's and Lora's initial threats to retaliate for the "massive fraud" were also made for the record, as they lack the political or military muscle to back their blustering. OAS observers present during the balloting gave the elections a clean bill of health.

The "New Government and Its Policies"

Given the relative stamp of approval accorded Balaguer's administration by the elections, no significant policy or personnel changes are expected. Although the President may shuffle his advisers somewhat, familiar faces will soon reappear, and policy, centralized in the President's hands, will remain essentially unaltered.

A new political party, the National Youth Movement (MNJ), also backed the President for re-election and contributed 47,000 votes to his win. Some of its members, even though they supported Balaguer as the only realistic choice to lead the country, are younger and more idealistic than the old guard in the President's Reformist Party and are optimistic that they will be able to effect policy changes in the new administration. They probably will be disappointed. The MNJ was in part a creature of Balaguer's own making, to serve as an auxiliary campaign vehicle in case the feuding that occurred last year in the Reformist Party got out of hand. It is doubtful that Balaguer regards it as much more than a temporary political expedient.

The President has announced that his new administration will be a "government of conciliation." This probably means that, as in 1966, he will offer some government posts to opposition party leaders. As was the case four years ago, it is quite likely that some of his foes, once they have finished licking their electoral wounds, will accept the proffered positions. In addition, there has been speculation that a new constitutional amendment may be passed to provide congressional seats to losing presidential and vice-presidential candidates. Such a move would be in keeping with Balaguer's "open-door" political policies and would cost him little.

None of these gestures, however, is likely to be translated into a meaningful role in the government for the opposition. For the most part, Balaguer's opponents have evinced little interest in the more constructive aspects of opposition leader-

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No major shake-up in the military seems likely. Balaguer has every reason to be satisfied with the armed forces' performance, despite the political problems his [redacted] security forces occasionally cause him when their

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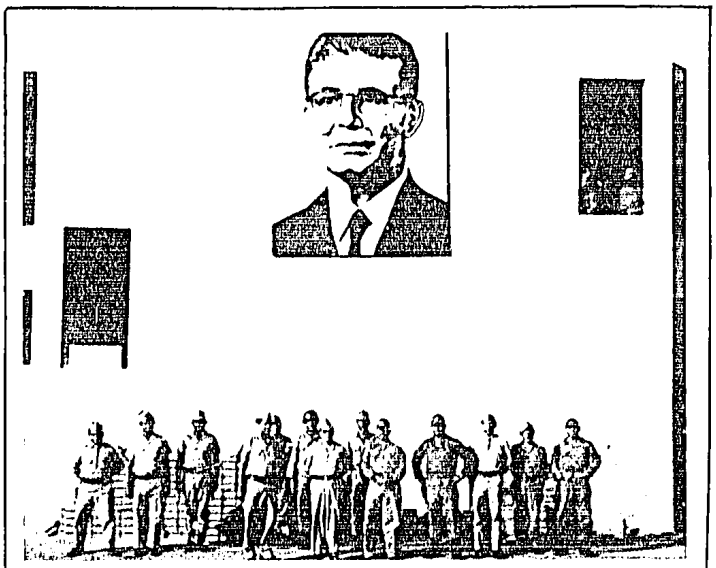

Balaguer's "apolitical" military: a provincial military fort decorated for the campaign

more brutal acts are publicized. Balaguer has, in any event, been relatively successful in sidestepping responsibility for the acts of what he terms "uncontrollables." Some of the military commanders who blatantly interfered with political campaigning in their areas were temporarily removed after Balaguer stepped down from the presidency, but they are once again in place. Any military changes following the inauguration probably will be an extension of the President's policy of using transfers to balance off rival military cliques.

Balaguer probably regards his policies as successful and, viewed from his perspective after years under Trujillo, progressive. His extensive public works program, assailed by critics as a piecemeal effort instead of the sweeping changes necessary for "meaningful reform," has been a successful political expedient and has held down discontent. Balaguer's modest land reform program compares favorably with Bosch's efforts early in his term in 1963, and Balaguer gets every inch of political mileage from such efforts. Even in the cities, where problems are insurmountable over the short term (unemployment is now 25-30 percent), Balaguer's combined emasculation of opposition unions and his promotion of business and foreign investment have made for steady, if unspectacular, economic growth uninterrupted by costly strikes. Labor dissent has focused on the administration's austerity program, but the President's pledge to ease controls and allow wage increases may also give him further breathing room in the urban areas.

Economic prospects over the short term are favorable, with GNP expected to rise about six percent annually over the next two years. US assistance has played an important part in the economic revival since the dislocation of 1965, and continued high US import quotas for the sugar crop will be necessary for substantial growth. A good share of the credit for the improvement, however, belongs to the administration for establishing a stable political climate and promoting investment opportunities. The expected economic progress will help to ease some of the political pressure on Balaguer.

The Threat to Stability

The voting made evident that the center and right, including business interests and the military, remain generally satisfied with Balaguer's performance. The conservative dissenters, such as Lora and Wessin, succeeded in demonstrating only that they presently do not have the resources necessary to undermine Balaguer. A serious threat to the government would require the participation of the right, but before the military would consider an alternative to Balaguer, the left would have to cause public order problems serious enough to strain the armed forces' capabilities. The forces on the left recognize this, and their strategy is designed to galvanize the right

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Pre-election PRD-supported rally in Santo Domingo

into action. Open dissent comes primarily from labor, the Communists, and Bosch's PRD.

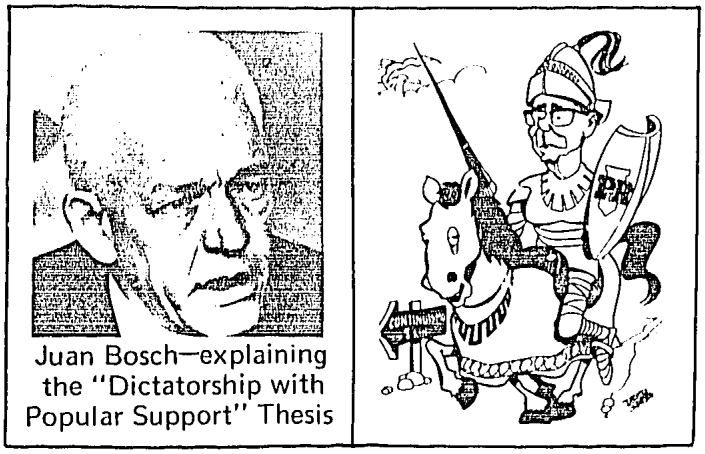
Labor violence, aggravated by slum pressures in the capital, is a persistent danger. Minor work stoppages by the transport unions, which are subject to significant leftist influence, have been a handy political tool for Balaguer's foes. His enemies, however, have not been able to move from such walkouts to a more widespread strike. The left, including the PRD, no longer can claim the strength in union circles that it had a few years ago. Balaguer has bought off some labor leadership and, as he did early this year, is willing to use the military to raid the headquarters of recalcitrant union chiefs in order to head off antigovernment activity.

The Communists suffer from a constantly splintering leadership that prevents their movement from achieving full effectiveness. An exception has been the recent activities of the Dominican Popular Movement (MPD), a violence-oriented group numbering about 300, which almost certainly was responsible for the successful kidnaping and ransoming of the US air attaché in March. It has also carried out most of the recent military and police assassinations. The MPD and other Communist groups, utilizing hard-core cadres and calling on some student support, have proved they can cause substantial public order problems and initiate bloody encounters with police. They will probably continue to do so, but their capabilities limit them to hit-and-run tactics. With Balaguer in power for another four years, the Communists may find that a hardened attitude on the part of the military, which is no longer subject to the public scrutiny it received during the campaign, will force them into a more defensive posture. Balaguer has been able to close off their student support on several occasions by shutting schools without stimulating serious protests.

The Dominican Revolutionary Party

The PRD remains the major opposition political force, if only because of the other parties'

poor electoral performances. It can still rely on substantial support in the urban areas, which no other opposition party can do. In the capital of Santo Domingo, a PRD-supported rally attracted the largest crowd of the entire campaign, even though the party was not running. There was some truth to PRD allegations that the government refused to issue demonstration permits to the party for fear of the crowds it might draw. So long as the magnetic Bosch remains at the party's helm, the PRD will continue to be a potentially explosive force.



Juan Bosch—explaining the "Dictatorship with Popular Support" Thesis

The party has moved increasingly to the left in recent years, a trend that is likely to continue. Party policy at present is ill-defined and is drifting toward Bosch's radical "Dictatorship with Popular Support" thesis for want of a clear alternative. This thesis rejects representative democracy as a failure in Latin America and promises the establishment of a vague, popular dictatorship that will represent the masses. The party now has removed itself from the legitimate political arena for at least the next four years; the realization that the party probably could not have defeated Balaguer under any circumstances undoubtedly played a part in its decision to abstain. Publicly, the party reasoned that its candidates would have been harassed by the military, probably defrauded of votes, and in any event not allowed to take office if it had won. The military's antagonism toward the PRD, however, has not changed markedly since 1966, when the party ran candidates, and the decision to withdraw is reflective not of altered conditions but of the party's frustration and drift to the left. The unrealistic abstentionist policy, which seems to lead to a political dead end, in conjunction with the return from self-imposed exile of party leader Bosch, has raised serious doubts about the party's ultimate intentions.

Bosch's unexpected return has been attributed both to a deal with the Communists to help lead a revolution and to a bargain with Balaguer to help him win re-election. Neither explanation is convincing. More likely, the many party appeals calling on him to return as the only person capable of leading the party and the nation in a time of crisis struck a responsive chord in the egotistical Bosch. The PRD leader, however, found the Dominican situation considerably less tense than the revolutionary fever pitch he had been led to expect while in Europe.

Bosch's newly imposed leadership, like the man, has been filled with contradictions, and the party is still groping for an answer to its internal problems. The decision to abstain, a vacillating affair that was not uniformly enforced, garnered only questionable prestige for the party, and resulted in no patronage. Bosch's presence has to some extent papered over the growing rift between party radicals and moderates, but only temporarily. Soft liners, including many of the party's prestigious members, must be decidedly unhappy with PRD strategy. They may remain in the party for want of any other place to go, but they are likely to withdraw increasingly from party activities. Younger radicals, also restive, are dissatisfied with Bosch's long-term, theoretical explanation of the coming revolution.

From a tactical point of view, it will be increasingly difficult for the PRD to avoid close contact with the Communists. Over the past 18 months there has been increased cooperation between the PRD and several Communist parties at

almost all levels. Although Bosch has warned that the party must not drift into the illegal Communist circle and fall victim to the political snare the government has set, it seems likely that the trend will continue. Like the Communists, the PRD now lacks legitimate representation and will be forced to try to incite and focus on popular discontent in order to make political capital and provide a forum. Other avenues are limited. The party could attempt to revive its atrophied labor bureaus and other pressure groups, but it is likely to have little success in these areas because it now lacks sources of patronage and finance. The PRD's decision to abstain from municipal elections in 1968, along with its subsequent loss of the municipal government in Santo Domingo and its accompanying patronage, has been one of the very reasons for its dwindling labor support.

If Bosch transfers his radical philosophizing into formal PRD policy, he will hand the government the excuse it needs to crack down on the party. Balaguer has refrained from any open move against the PRD, preferring to utilize his divide-and-conquer tactics rather than risk unifying the party and possibly stirring up its popular support with an overt move. If he intends to step down in 1974, however, he will want to leave the PRD in as weak a position as possible and with little chance of winning an election. Given the proclivity of many of the military chiefs to regard the PRD as little better than Communist, the party may find that its decision to operate outside the formal political arena has opened it to a greater risk of repression.

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Bosch remains one of the keys to PRD fortunes. Whether he will remain in the country is

when the election fever permanently subsides after the August inauguration, he may once again find the mundane task of running an out-of-power party for four years a bit tedious. If he again decides to leave the country, no matter what the ostensible reasons, both his prestige and that of the party will suffer. The PRD is not apt to disappear as long as it has the mystique of Bosch and the revolutionary rhetoric of 1965 to call upon; indeed, Dominican political parties need little more than the name of a famous personality to survive. The party's prospects are clouded, at best, however. The possibility of an internal split has been enhanced by recent events, and Bosch's departure could hasten a break between dissatisfied younger radicals and some of the party's old guard. Even if the party remains intact, it is bound to lapse into organizational disarray.

With the elections behind, Balaguer's frustrated opponents quickly turned their attention to the OAS General Assembly meeting, which was scheduled to be held in Santo Domingo in late June. The left, led by Juan Bosch, kicked off the protests against the conclave, and almost all political groups outside the government joined in the anti-OAS chorus. Student-led demonstrations resulted in almost daily casualties and, in the face of further violence, OAS representatives decided to move the meeting to Washington. The decision to shift the site removed a short-term irritant from government-opposition relations and should have a temporary calming effect. Over a longer period, the left will be buoyed by what it regards as an unqualified victory, and it will be even more prone to use civil disorder to exert pressure on the administration.

Like the OAS meeting, Balaguer's inauguration on 16 August will be an almost inevitable target of protests, but these are likely to be more vocal than violent. With the international spotlight now removed from Santo Domingo, the Balaguer government will be less reluctant to deal firmly with any further attempts to promote disorder.

Prospects

Possibly the greatest threat to the administration is the unorganized popular dissatisfaction with the political system. The increased disgruntlement has been most apparent among

youth. Secondary school disturbances have been mounting, and the level of student violence is higher than at any time since the 1965 crisis. In part, this has been due to the catalytic effect of the elections, but it is also symptomatic of a deeper trend. Cities in the interior, not normally affected by the political life centered on the capital, are being drawn into the political system. Santiago, the nation's second largest city and traditionally a quiet bastion of conservative business interests, was the site of some of the most serious military-civilian clashes during the campaign. The trend is evident in the countryside as well, highlighted by more frequent land seizures, some increased activity on the part of the church, and similarly an alienation of youth. This alienation probably also contributed to this year's low voter turnout.

Thus far, however, dissatisfaction remains organizationally adrift. There has been no widespread flocking to the PRD banner in the cities, and peasant unions remain small and ineffective. Moreover, as long as the opposition concentrates on personalities rather than programs and exhausts its resources in revolutionary rhetoric, the dissent probably will remain disturbing but amorphous. As such, it appears to be a manageable, short-term problem.

Conclusions

Balaguer begins his new term with impressive credits that should, at the very least, bring him some respite from serious political attack. The all-important military, if not ideologically committed to constitutional government, is nonetheless ready to stick with a winner. Balaguer will not hesitate to use the security forces as a repressive weapon, despite the probability of increased civilian and military casualties, in order to control the extreme left's expected attempts to incite disorder. The President's popular mandate is impressive under the circumstances. His opponents on the right have been temporarily chastened by their poor showing, and the leftist PRD will have to solve its tactical problem of how to operate while in political limbo before it will constitute a serious threat. If the present divisiveness in party ranks is any indication, much of the PRD's energies may be dissipated in internal feuding. Despite these assets for the administration, the party's decision to operate outside the legal political framework means that the government's public order problems, already significant, probably will increase during the next four-year term.

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